

breeding. No bird of the duck kind that has white down, as far as I know, places its eggs in an exposed situation.

The Goosander, Golden Eye, Sheldrake, birds differing much from one another, have all white down, and all lay their eggs in holes of trees when such are to be found, whilst one of them at least has well-coloured eggs.

Beeston, Nottingham,
December 20, 1858.

VIII.—*Recent Discoveries in European Oology.*

By WILLIAM C. HEWITSON.

(Plate II.)

It is with very great pleasure that I find myself again associated with old friends and fellow-labourers in endeavouring to promote a favourite and delightful study.

Birds' eggs, though beautiful objects in themselves, and amongst the first of God's glorious works which gave utterance to that burst of joy which has never forsaken some of us through life, may be made of the greatest use in ornithological study, and would of themselves alone form a foundation towards a general arrangement of birds.

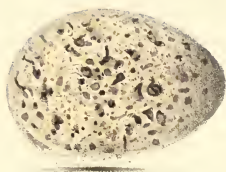
For the eggs of the three species now figured and the notes, which accompany them, I am indebted to the Rev. H. B. Tristram. They have been discovered since the completion of the third edition of the 'Eggs of British Birds,' and that of the *Cursorius* is a most valuable addition to our oological knowledge.

I have adopted those specific names for the three species by which Mr. G. R. Gray has shown that they were first christened. It is quite time that English ornithologists should adopt that golden rule in nomenclature, the right of priority, from which no naturalist should ever deviate.

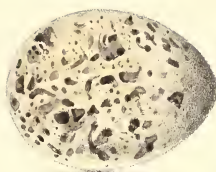
CUCULUS GLANDARIUS, Linn. Great Spotted Cuckoo. Eggs, Plate II. figs. 1, 2.

The following most interesting account is from the pen of Mr. Tristram. It does not quite settle the question as to the nesting habits of this bird, and does not exonerate it beyond a

4.



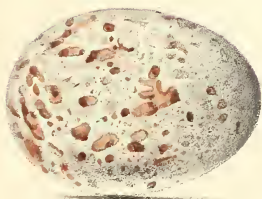
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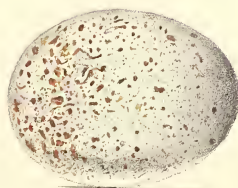
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1.



2.



doubt from the stain which is attached to the character of our well-known species. Mr. Tristram, although inclining to the belief that the *C. glandarius* rears its own young ones, acknowledges that the eggs are so like those of a magpie of the country, in the nest of which it lays them, that the eggs of the two birds for a time passed his critical eye, and were labeled as those of one and the same species. The eggs are certainly well-adapted to represent those of a magpie, but are still more like those of our own thrushes. That represented in fig. 2 is a facsimile of the egg of the blackbird, both in size and colour. That in fig. 1, except that it is larger, would pass for the egg of the ring-ouzel. Mr. Tristram says, "In our expedition of the spring of 1857, we were fortunate enough to pitch our tents, for upwards of three weeks, in a valley between two of the southern spurs of the Eastern Atlas range, which proved to be one of the very few breeding localities of the Great Spotted Cuckoo as yet discovered in North Africa. In the middle of May we had noticed it several times, but could obtain no clue to its breeding-habits, until one day I had extended a long ride as far as a French outpost, when an officer showed me a Cuckoo he had just skinned, and gave me an egg he had taken from the ovary ready for deposition. He told me that in a certain wood near our camp he had in former years taken nests, and had never, during a fifteen years' residence in Africa, observed the bird in any other district, and that even here it seemed confined to very narrow limits. Within a very few days after this a nest rewarded our search, containing a single egg ready to hatch (May 20th): the nest was in the top of a tree in the forest. After this we found several other nests. I am aware that M. Brehm*, who has described the habits of this bird in Nubia, attributes to it the same evasion of domestic duties of which our *C. canorus* is guilty, and states that it makes use of the nests of the *Corvidæ*, whose eggs its own in some degree resemble as to colouring. But, as far as my own observation goes, I cannot concur in the accusation of its use of a foundling hospital, further than that I believe it does appropriate and repair the deserted

* See Cabanis' Journal für Ornithologie, 1853, p. 144, and Zoologist, xx. 3987.

tenements of *Pica mauritanica* and *Athene meridionalis*. In this view I am borne out by my companions Mr. O. Salvin and Mr. W. H. Simpson. We all devoted much time and care to the solution of this Cuckoo's habits, and never found it laying its eggs in a nest already occupied.

"On one occasion one of our Arabs came and told me he had found a nest of the '*Burroo Burroo*' (its local name) in the forest. I accompanied him to the spot. The male bird took flight from a branch of an adjoining tree; and in the top of a gnarled old terebinth, where a branch had at some period been rent from the trunk and formed a cavity, I espied a nest like that of the little owl (certainly not that of a magpie), and protruding therefrom the long tail-feathers of my friend. She flew screaming off, and I found left two eggs, set rather hard. On another occasion a nest of four eggs, fresh, was brought us. We found but this one nest of four eggs, one of three, two nests of two each, and two of one each. I have been somewhat prolix on this question because our experience is so different from that of Dr. Brehm. A friend has suggested that perhaps the Cuckoo, before depositing her eggs, ejects those of the rightful occupant.

"It is fair to add, that on unpacking our collections some months after, it was found that a few days before discovering the Great Spotted Cuckoo's nest we had placed two of its eggs along with two undoubtedly those of *Pica mauritanica*, and labeled them as being all of the latter bird, and of one nest. These four eggs appear by our notes to have been brought in by our Arabs, and it is quite possible they may have placed the eggs of two nests, which they took to be of the same species, together, to save themselves trouble in bringing them home; and that we, who did not value the magpie's eggs, had stowed them away without any particular observation.

"*C. glandarius* has three notes: a call-note something like that of *C. canorus*, probably used by the male; its cry of alarm, something between that of the Jay and the Roller; and its third note, '*Wurree Wurree*,' from which it doubtless derives its Arab name, just as the common Cuckoo is called by them '*Tookook*.'"

CURSORIUS GALLICUS, Gmel. Cream-coloured Courser. (*C. isabellinus*, Temm.) Egg, Plate II. fig. 3.

Although rare in Europe, this species has for more than half a century been recorded as a British bird. For the discovery of its eggs, ornithologists are indebted to the Rev. H. B. Tristram, who has kindly sent me the following notes: "Although during the winter of 1856-57 I penetrated several hundred miles into the Algerian Sahara, and beyond its limits as far as between latitude 31° and 30° , yet this bird only once came under my observation, being evidently for the most part only a summer migrant to those regions. In the month of June 1857, I twice met with small flocks of them on the Hauts plateaux between Biskra and Batna, to the south of Constantine. During the previous summer of 1856, I had met with the bird several times in the western Sahara, north of Laghouat, and especially in the neighbourhood of Ain Oosera, a solitary caravansary in the desert, kept up by the French government as a military halting-place.

"Though certain that the birds were breeding there at the time, I was unable to detect their nest; but shortly after my departure, the keeper of the caravansary, who had assisted me in my search, and who had in previous years frequently taken the eggs, and cooked them as omelets along with those of the *Pterocles setarius*, found the nest and sent me the eggs, three in number. According to his account, the Courser always adheres to this number, as indeed might have been expected from the character of the bird.

"It makes no nest whatever, but deposits its eggs on the bare soil in the most arid plains."

Eggs sent from Tangiers, deposited by birds in a state of confinement, and consequently smaller and more faintly coloured than the one now figured, are in the collections of Mr. Gurney and Mr. A. Newton. The one figured bears a very striking resemblance both in shape and colour to some of the eggs of the Norfolk Plover. The delicate undulations are not easily imitated in a drawing.

TURNIX AFRICANUS, Desfont.; Gray's Genera, p. 510. (*Hemipodius tachydromus*, Temm.) Andalusian Quail. Eggs, Plate II. figs. 4, 5.

This species has been introduced as a British bird by Mr.

Yarrell, and figured as such in the Supplement to his work, from a specimen said to have been killed in Oxfordshire. Mr. Tristram says, that "although not rare in the wooded districts of northern Algeria, its nest had, until last year, eluded the researches of all the French collectors. Various eggs had from time to time come into the hands of the Paris dealers, the produce of birds in captivity; but these two eggs are, as far as I can ascertain, the very first from a bird in a state of nature. They were taken by Capt. Loche, of the French army, in Kobah forest, on July 11th, 1857. The nest contained seven eggs, nearly fresh. It was placed on the ground in the midst of a dense thicket of underwood, most ingeniously concealed, and where no dog could penetrate to put up the bird.

"It was in such situations that I had frequently before found the Hemipode, which never occurs in the plains or in the desert. When disturbed, it is scarcely possible to make it take wing. When beaten out of a bush, it half runs, half flies, to the nearest cover, somewhat after the manner and with much of the appearance of Baillon's Crake. I do not believe that it migrates in the Atlas, as specimens are occasionally found at all times of the year; nor does it appear ever to congregate, either in flocks or bevs, after the manner of the Quail, to which, indeed, in all its habits it affords a striking contrast.

"The female is very much larger and generally more brilliant in colouring than the male, and is at least one-third heavier than her mate. I was out with Capt. Loche when he discovered this nest, of which he kindly allotted me three eggs."

Mr. Gould has figured the two sexes as of equal size, and says that it is difficult to distinguish them by their plumage each from the other.

The eggs bear but little resemblance to those of other gallinaeous birds. The shell is delicate and thin, and touched with a neutral purple tint, which gives them some likeness to those of the Pratincole.

IX.—Review of Mr. BREE’s ‘Birds of Europe not observed in the British Isles.’*

It is a matter of great regret that the ornithology of Europe has been hitherto so little studied by British naturalists. This fact has always been regarded with wonder by our continental brethren,—very naturally, too, when they think that of the troops of tourists who annually swarm over Europe, how vast a majority are our fellow-countrymen, and reflect that in England the study of Natural History is scarcely pursued but by amateurs for their own gratification. We confess that it is not easy to account for this. Perhaps the chief cause is the comparative rarity with which birds present themselves on the Continent. How often, when questioning a friend just returned from his summer’s trip to Holland, up the Rhine, or among the Alps—or, it may be from exploring the passes of the Pyrenees, the cones of Mount Etna, or the fjelds of Norway—as to what he may have observed of the feathered tribes during his rambles, has the answer been, “O, there are no birds abroad!” and thus it has come to be believed that the Continent is nearly as *unavi-ferous* as Lake Avernus itself! Yet the birds are there, if travellers will but look for them, and birds, too, possessing great interest even to those ornithologists who confine their attention solely to the species found within the compass of the four seas. But we trust that a spirit of more extended research is growing up, that soon the continental reproach may be taken away, and that our fellow-countrymen, as regards Natural History, may no longer be sneered at as “*penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.*” The Englishman is catholic enough in his other sympathies: he knows to a nicety the points wherein St. Peter’s surpasses St. Paul’s, can compare the merits of York Minster and Cologne Cathedral, has an opinion of his own as to the best means of preserving the faded remains of Leonardo da Vinci’s master-piece, just as he has with regard to the right mode, if any, of restoring the national pictures in Trafalgar Square; he pronounces au-

* *A History of the Birds of Europe not observed in the British Isles*, illustrated with accurately-coloured Plates. By C. R. BREE, Esq. London: Groombridge and Sons. [In course of publication.]